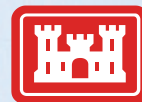


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SOUNDINGS

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Detroit District

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Hurricane recovery special edition



**District employees
recount experiences
from Gulf-Region
hurricanes**

Katrina lessons reinforce Corps hallmark for Commander

By Jennifer Thomas
Special Contributor

"Relevant, Ready, Responsive, Reliable—that is the hallmark of the Corps of Engineers," said Lt. Col. Donald Lauzon, District Engineer, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Detroit District.

According to the District Commander, those four words have never been more accurate than on Aug. 30, 2005. Just one day after Hurricane Katrina made landfall Lauzon received a call from Brig. Gen. Bruce Berwick, Commander, USACE, Great Lakes and Ohio River Division, asking Lauzon to join him as his Deputy Task Force Engineer and Chief of Operations for Task Force Katrina in support of U.S. Army Northern Command.

Within hours, Lauzon flew from Detroit to Nashville. Once in Nashville, he met with Corps personnel from several districts, including Huntington and Nashville as well as staff from the Division Office in Cincinnati; they departed the next day and headed to Mississippi to what was becoming widely known as the "worst natural disaster in recent history" as deemed by the National Weather Service.

"Cell phones no longer worked at the Mississippi border so outside communication was impossible," he said. "Gas stations were lined up with cars waiting to refuel and trees and debris were scattered everywhere."

The Department of Defense (DoD) mission in Mississippi was led by Lt. Gen. Russel Honore, 1st U.S. Army Commander. The goal of the task force was to coordinate DoD support

(Cover photo by: Lt. Col. Donald Lauzon)



Lt. Col. Don Lauzon and the hurricane-recovery team put in 20-hour days during initial recovery efforts.

for disaster relief efforts in the hurricane's aftermath. This meant interfacing between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) the Corps and DoD, as well as providing ice, water, power, temporary roofing and debris removal for the residents of

Mississippi, Alabama and Louisiana.

"There in New Orleans, working with the Prime Power Battalion (249th Engineers) and, using 1.5 megawatt generators, we restored power to city government within two days," he said. "While working with Task Force Hope, I provided support to three primary breached levee areas: 17th Street Canal and two levees on London Avenue, while Plaquemines Parish was also being carefully monitored. The Corps of Engineers team worked seven days a week, 20 hours a day to leverage all the engineer assets in the area of operations.

"One of the most devastating blows to Joint Task Force Katrina was the notification that Hurricane Rita, a Category 4 storm, was headed directly to the area. In the days before Hurricane Rita

See 'Lauzon,' page 4



Photos by Lt. Col. Don Lauzon

Seaworthy vessels and boat slips didn't fare well through Katrina's fury

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SOUNDINGS

DISTRICT ENGINEER

Lt. Col. Donald Lauzon

CHIEF, PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

Lynn Duerod

ACTING DEPUTY PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Casondra Brewster

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Joyce Hess

Jennifer Thomas

First deployment in 20 years proves meaningful

By Casondra Brewster

Public Affairs Office

Wanda Carter-Davis hasn't deployed for the Corps of Engineers in 20 years, "Not since I was much younger," she jokes.

But all that changed when she saw a cable news report in the early hours after Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast Region.

"They were covering a man, his young, sad-looking kids standing at his side," she recalls. "He was telling how he tried to hold onto his wife when the flood waters hit. He couldn't hold on. He had to let his wife go, so he could save his babies. It really tore me up. Still today when I think about it, it makes me cry."

After a brief silence, she finishes her thought, "So, I figured if I could do anything, I could go down and help." After another pregnant pause, she adds, "I suppose you could sign-up for the extra money, but it's not about the money. It should not be about the money," she punctuates her statement with a heavy sigh. "It's about the people – people like you and me."

So Carter-Davis was part of one of the first teams to head down to the Gulf Region both right after Katrina and again after Hurricane Rita.

With 33 years of government contract-

ing experience, she was a natural to help with the multitude of contracts that would spring forth in the Katrina aftermath.

"It was really fast-paced and high energy," Carter-Davis said. "I spent my first days assisting the ice and water teams – a logistical nightmare – over in the area where they were transporting the water and ice to the people who needed it.

"I spent an entire day with them trying to work through the system and help them coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, FEMA – all the while it's getting hot and heavy – locals needed water and ice and the taskers weren't coming quickly enough so we could release the subsistence items to them."

She said the work was not just hard, but extremely rewarding. "I actually learned a new thing or two, as well," she said, explaining that she got to really see how her military counterparts operated and it was a new experience for her.

"I've worked for the Army Corps of Engineers for 30-some years, but I've never really worked with the Army."

She continued work on all areas where Corps contracts did or would come into play in the recovery efforts, serving as a team leader and constantly coordinating reports for Headquarters USACE leaders.

"At one point it seemed all you could do was do reports and provide stats for Congress," she said. "But I'm proud to say that my name is on one of the big contracting documents that will rebuild the Gulf Coast Region."

Many of the personnel return-

Detroit District On Point for Hurricane Relief

Personnel on ground
currently: 29

Personnel already
deployed and returned: 56

Awaiting deployment: 15

Editor's Note: If you'd like to be a part of this group, talk with your supervisor and then contact Gary Bailey in the Emergency Operations Center, 313-554-8218.



Photo by Lt. Col. Don Lauzon

Wanda Carter-Davis, (lower left) contracting officer, Detroit District, works with one of the first teams, including Division Commander, Brig. Gen. Bruce Berwick, during the Gulf Coast Region hurricane recovery efforts.

ing from the sites of devastation remark about the smells. Carter-Davis can still recall some of the more unpleasant smells.

"I spent about three days having to work with the Debris Removal Teams and going through the dump sites. I kept uttering 'yuck' during that time. And the smell was just horrible. Even after returning from the field to the base office, I kept thinking I smelled like the dump. (My fellow deployees) kept laughing at me because I kept (deodorizing) everything."

She said when she left finally it was very evident that the Corps was hard at work. "All you could see as you looked down from the plane were miles and miles of blue tarps.

"There's so much work down there – hell of an experience. I think everyone should take a rotation down there," she said, noting that she was pretty sure she was the oldest person on her team.

Along with the experience of a lifetime, both personally and professionally, Carter-Davis was amazed at the display of human spirit she encountered.

"People do come together," she said. "And when they come together for a common objective – they'd do anything for you. It's amazing."

Katrina damage through Detroit

Lauzon, from page 2

made landfall on Sept. 24, 2005, everyone rushed to fill in levee breach sites and prepared to ride out the storm."

Lauzon was one of the first Corps employees to arrive in New Orleans' 9th Ward after Rita. The 9th Ward suffered the most significant damage due to the massive rainfall during and after Rita.

Returning home to Detroit after nearly 30 days in the hurricane-ravaged region, Lauzon said, "The disaster was traumatic and will be well remembered for many years to come. I was involved in the aftermath of 9/11 and now the hurricanes that devastated our Gulf Coast.

"To see the superb men and women of the Army Corps of Engineers in action is just another reason why I'm so proud to be a part of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We are an agency that delivers results worldwide, and in Detroit particularly where we've had 56 employees deploy to the New Orleans area and return. Just as important, many more employees worked diligently back home to keep this organization running throughout the deployments.

"The superb men and women of this great District stand ready 24/7 to support our nation's needs any time, or place. I appreciate each and every Detroit District team member."



Entire subdivisions were destroyed in the hurricane's wake. Many neighbors



Homes sustained wind and storm damage, and then were flooded following levee breaches.



These vehicles were no match for

bit Commander's eyes



Neighborhoods remain deserted today.



The power of water is evident in the storm's aftermath.



Breached levees allowed massive amounts of water to flood neighborhoods.

Photos by Lt. Col. Don Lauzon



For the forces of the Fall 2005 hurricanes.



Damage and destruction everywhere gives way to hope and blue roofs on some of the more stable structures.

Young employee experiences first time deployment

By Casondra Brewster

Public Affairs Office

It's not just the old vets who leap at the chance to deploy during emergency operations or the Global War on Terror.

Detroit District's John Bochenek, a physical scientist working for the district for just two and a half years, said he jumped at the chance to go and help victims of Hurricane Katrina.

"I wanted to help out after the hurricane," he said. "(Deployment) provided that opportunity."

Bochenek flew down to Jackson, Miss., with three other district employees, Dave Barilovich, Pat Kuhne and Jack Frost. From Jackson they had to drive to Vicksburg, Miss., for the night. Following a day of orientation, the foursome drove down to Pascagoula, Miss.

"We bunked in the local high school and slept on cots for a few days," Bochenek said. "Once more of the motels came back online, I managed to find a formerly flooded motel room. That's where I finally got a good night's sleep."

Bochenek spent the rest of the month in Pascagoula, working on the Hurricane Debris Removal Team.

"Primarily I was out on the streets coordinating with several contractors who would collect debris—downed trees, flooded or ruined household furnishings—to make sure the debris removal operation in my area was



Photo by John Bochenek

John Bochenek, from the Regulatory Office, would deploy again if it means he could help people devastated by this type of destruction in their lives.

done safely and completely."

Bochenek had very little negative to say about his experience, except for one thing—the smell. "There was vegetation along the highway that was piled up due to the flooding, which really stunk. There were refrigerators full of food that had been baking out in the sun for a couple of weeks. And everything was damp, moldy and hot. The smells just hit you like a punch in the face."

In contrast, Bochenek said that Southern hospitality lived up to its reputation. "Just about everyone was welcoming and generous even in the time of a total disaster," he said. "People were working together to help neighbors and I couldn't start working in an area without someone bringing out sweet tea

or offering me something to eat."

Dealing with that hospitality can make a Detroit native nervous. "Initially, I kept thinking, 'now what does this guy want'? But after a few days I started to understand the mentality."

Bochenek said he would deploy again "in a second!" His month-long adventure left him with many memorable experiences. He listed some of his more memorable sightings— from seeing boats on top of buildings or even in the woods, to seeing the 'you loot we shoot' signs, seeing some of the biggest bugs he's seen in his life to seeing his first real bayou and cypress swamp and eating true southern cooking. "I was never bored and the month flew by."

Detroit Area Office employee works for hurricane relief while his own home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina

By Casondra Brewster
Public Affairs Office

Before Hurricane Katrina hit, a team of federal employees were in ready stance to react in disaster-relief mode.

"Contrary to what the media would have you believe, the Corps was not slow in responding to the disaster. We were there before it even happened," said Steve Thompson, from the Detroit Area Office.

Thompson, chief, Maintenance Division, was part of a Detroit District Corps Ice Planning and Response Team (PRT) with the mission of distributing ice post-hurricane and was on the ground in Vicksburg, Miss. before Katrina made land fall.

"I've done this mission before,"

Thompson said. "During the hurricanes in Florida (2004) the average deployment was about 10 days. Typically we pre-position ourselves before the storm, wait it out, wait for the power to die and begin handing out ice to those who need it. This time was different right from the start. You just knew it was going to be a long, long time before everything was all right."

As it turned out, Hurricane Katrina's mission was decidedly different, especially given that Hurricanes Rita and Wilma followed not too far along after Katrina's damage.

"For 42 days we worked to get ice to those affected," said Thompson. From Vicksburg, Miss. and then later in Jackson,

Miss., Thompson's team literally moved tons of ice and later water throughout the Gulf Coast Region.

"The first few weeks were a particular struggle," the self-proclaimed military brat, Thompson said. "The power went out, just like it had during our work on Hurricanes Ivan, Jeanne and Frances. But it didn't eventually come back on as it had following the Florida storms. So, we had no communication, no visibility where Corps people or the ice was going. Not only no communication, but there were moments where we couldn't get fuel to get the trucks where they needed to go and when they got there, the roads were damaged or blocked or there were no street signs to

help the drivers know where they needed to go next.

"But everyone was so dedicated. I saw plenty of times where people slept right at their station and then got up after a quick nap and got at it again. Everyone was so dedicated, so unselfish.

"I would get really aggravated with the negative media reports. I thought, how can they not see what I see? How could they not see the positive efforts being done?"

Thompson was at first the mission manager for the ice team and then later on he said he inherited the water mission, all the while his own property—his wife's childhood home, was hit by flood waters that invaded

See 'Home,' page 7

Truck driver owes life to Detroit Corps employee

By Lynn Duerod

Public Affairs Office

During the recovery efforts operations following Hurricane Katrina, Louisiana landfills were buzzing with activity from thousands of trucks rolling through each day. These debris removing workhorses were key in keeping the clean-up process rolling along.

On one particularly super busy afternoon, a contract truck driver, from the Ceres Company, ended up owing his life to a Detroit District employee.

David Curran, from the Detroit District's Duluth Area Office, was working Quality Assurance Inspections at the Hwy-90 Landfill, when he had the opportunity to change the life of someone forever.

The Hwy-90 Landfill was one of the busiest in the New Orleans area. Literally tons of debris was being trucked to this one location. The pace was fast, sometimes hectic Curran said.

A truck loaded with 70-yards



David Curran, from Detroit District's Duluth Area Office, standing on a bridge near New Orleans, where the bridge support and various other debris crumbled in a huge pile.

of construction and demolition (C&D) materials, stopped at the entrance tower of the landfill to receive a coded ticket for payment.

Curran recounts that the truck driver climbed out of the vehicle's cab, without applying the brake, climbed onto the ladder on the back of the truck and removed the tarp covering the load.

While the driver was on top of the trailer the truck proceeded to roll down an embankment

towards a steep cliff. The driver had nowhere to go, was too high on top of the truck to jump off, and was too far from the cab to stop the truck.

"I was doing debris ticket intake, and while I was inputting the data a debris semi truck pulled up," Curran said. "As I was filling out his ticket, the trailer started to roll down the hill towards the washout that led to the drop off cliff. Somebody said something, but no one else was moving to help. So, from

my position a few yards away, I ran to the truck, opened the door, turned the steering wheel to angle the tires away from the direction of the drop off, then I applied the brakes."

Curran applied the brakes moments before the truck would have rolled off the cliff.

Just after the incident Curran thought, "I was calm, taking in what had just happened because there was nothing between the driver and the cliff, thinking the driver could have been in serious trouble, just because he wasn't doing his job to keep his safety in mind."

By putting himself in danger, Curran saved the driver, saved the truck and incidentally saved the contractor and landfill owners from possible litigation.

"I felt that there was a very severe accident about to happen, and severe injury or death could have occurred. The driver was very grateful. The land owner of the C&D landfill thanked me for saving him accident fees, a possible lawsuit and environmental clean-up -- because there was a lake below the cliff.

"My boss on-site, Mike Bourgeois, the resident engineer for the Hwy-90 landfill, was amazed at the situation, because he witnessed the whole thing, and was grateful there was no loss of life.

"I attribute my quick reaction in responding to the situation to the multifaceted training that USACE continually strives for us to be aware of and attend including situational awareness, defensive driving, DoD training, and especially safety requirement EM 385."

When asked if he would do it all again and what he would tell others in this situation, Curran answered, "First I'm scheduled to redeploy at the first of the year (2006) because I feel it's our responsibility to support our agency, and help those in need. Second I know the safety training has been a direct result in my attitude toward personal and site safety."

———— 'Home,' from page 6
most of the area.

"It was a tough time for my wife," Thompson said. "With my wife being from Louisiana and her family was there, plus she has strong ties to New Orleans. And then I wasn't home to support her. That was hard.

But luckily we have good friends who were here for her, besides being a pretty strong lady -- she toughed it out." He added that his home of record is also New Orleans.

On day 43 after Katrina made landfall, Thompson was finally able to check out his home in

Metairie, which is just west of New Orleans, in the hard-hit Jefferson Parish.

"There was nine inches of water throughout the house and the mold had grown up more than 4 feet on all the walls," Thompson detailed. "The people we were renting the home to lost everything. They didn't have any rental insurance. They've since relocated."

His home is still being renovated. He said he feels lucky because he had homeowner's insurance as well as flood insurance.

"Then I really lucked out because the contractor I hired to do the (demolition) and renovation to the house is now renting it. He's also working on approximately eight other homes in the neighborhood and everyone is happy to be moving forward.

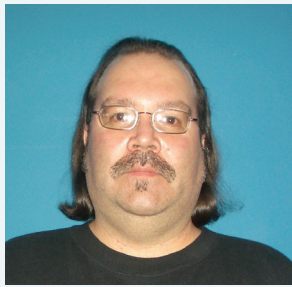
"It's not going to ever be the same down there."



US Army photo

Impassable roads, like this one, made it difficult to get help to those in need.

Employees of the Quarter



Ed Parzych
Duluth Area Office
Construction Survey Section

Ed Parzych is recognized for his efforts performing construction inspection on the McQuade Small Craft Project in the Duluth area. The project, considered high profile and controversial, required coordination not only with the contractor and numerous agencies, but also with citizen community groups and local governing groups that had worked very hard to bring this project to fruition over a span of 15-plus years. Parzych's ability to work with all parties and involve them in the project in a positive way demonstrates his commitment to teamwork and customer service. Parzych's outstanding efforts improved the project and made it a success.



Chris Lindman
Operations Office
Technical Services Branch

Chris Lindman is recognized for his outstanding efforts in tackling complex problems integrating P2 with outdated software and constantly changing data. He demonstrated his continued commitment to improving communications by ensuring all critical issues and problems were transmitted in detail to the entire multi-disciplinary team. Lindman excelled at customer service by providing critical budget data to all parties concerned on a near real-time basis. Lindman is recognized for his commitment to working through challenges and putting a premium on teamwork and communication.



Jennifer Thomas
Knowledge Management
Public Affairs Office

Jennifer Thomas, detailed to the Public Affairs Office, is recognized for her outstanding work during a critical time for PAO while all other staff members were on leave or deployed. Thomas demonstrated a strong ability to take charge of the situation, ensuring that office programs continued to function. Thomas attended critical meetings, maintained the media clips, answered media queries, continued to update the district Web Site, communicated issues and updates with division headquarters, and completed a first-rate, 16-page "Soundings" edition. She is recognized for her tenacity and steadfast commitment to customer service.

Partners for the Great Lakes Golf Outing



Golf Game: Four Person Scramble
Date: Friday, May 12, 2006
Place: Selfridge Air National Guard Base Course
Tee Time: Shotgun starts at 10:00 a.m.
Putting Contest 8:30 a.m.

Commitment and payment by: **April 22, 2006**

Outing fees include: golf, cart, drinks, meals and prizes

Information & reservations call:
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